

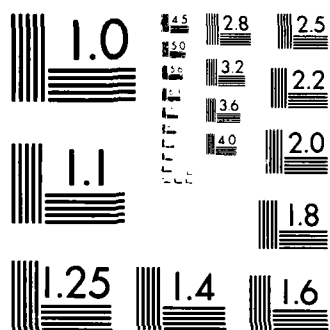
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UNEXPECTED RESPONSE

BY

LTC THOMAS R. WHITE

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

UNEXPECTED RESPONSE

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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This paper is an individual essay which reviews the NATO mission of deterrence and the threat of its use of nuclear weapons. It suggests that the threat is viable until a war starts, but then becomes meaningless because the FRG would opt for a different course of action--its 'Unexpected Response.' The conclusion is that conventional forces are the essential deterrent given strategic parity. Then strategic mobility is addressed as it provides greater conventional reinforcement potential than generally assumed. An 'Unexpected Response' by the Congress which could be counter-productive to the use of our new mobility is then discussed.

The principle of surprise must be on every list of things to consider when conducting a campaign or planning a war. Concurrent with the idea of trying to achieve surprise in whatever arena is appropriate, one must similarly work very hard to prevent his being surprised by a prospective opponent. This is one of the reasons for the existence of the various intelligence organizations which have proliferated in the world. Of course, surprise is not limited to our opponents--our friends and allies are also fully capable of doing (or not doing) something which is absolutely unexpected, that is they may not act in accordance with what one perceives as a valid assumption. In order to distinguish between the surprise caused by an opponent and that caused by a friend, let us consider the latter an 'unexpected response.' Then, just as a major effort is conducted to prevent surprise, a similar effort should be made to identify those areas which might lead to an 'unexpected response' which would be unsettling to US policy, strategy, etc. This paper will explore two potential 'unexpected responses' that would be unsettling in very different ways.

Since the end of WWII, there has been a new element added to the political military equation. That being the

competition for world influence between the US and the USSR with the capability of each to destroy the social structure of the other. This competition has taken many forms with many levels of intensity. There have been face-to-face confrontations such as Berlin and Cuba. There have also been periods of cooperation, negotiation and agreement. Economic trade is cautiously developed both directly and through surrogates. Conflict is also carried out through sets of surrogates. Each day brings a new variation on this theme of super power competition. It has become an ever present fact of contemporary life. It is constant in both its presence and in its ever changing form. There is one other constant which appears dominant--that being the effort by the US to 'contain' the Soviets and their efforts to 'expand' their sphere of influence. It may be argued that 'containment' has not always been the articulated theme of US policy. Yet, it can also be argued that it has never gone away as a visceral element of US policy--even during detente. Key elements of 'containment' are mutually obligating treaties and massive expenditures for war avoidance by making it excessively dangerous, i.e., deterrence.

Deterrence, itself, has taken many forms as emphasis

has shifted through the big bang, limited response, superiority, parity, etc. The tentative steps along the lines of a strategic defense are one more variation on the theme of deterrence. As 'containment' has deterrence as an essential ingredient, so also has deterrence evolved to use forward deployment as part of its essence. The extended overseas tour is now an accepted form of military life. The presence of the US in Europe and Korea as represented by our military presence with families and all associated life support systems may not be immutable, but it seems to be an article of faith on all sides--one only need recall the Carter attempt to withdraw from Korea to gain an insight about the strength of the commitment.¹

This presence continues because it is a necessary part of our national policy of 'protecting' Europe from the expansionist tendencies of the Soviets. It stems in part from the political necessities of post WWII Europe, i.e., Pan-Europeanism, a non-agrarian Germany and eventually German rearmament. To many, the price of the reindustrialization and rearmament of that portion of Germany occupied by the western powers was the continued presence of American soldiers in the area.² As the consensus for a European military alliance for defense

began to develop, it became apparent that the only way for the US to retain unquestioned leadership was to take advantage of both its nuclear and conventional strengths. This required American troops on the ground prior to the opening of hostilities in order to guarantee the viability of the nuclear response. At that time troop presence could only be assured by "permanent" stationing because of the constraints, logistic and political, of deploying from CONUS in a timely manner. Obviously, there can be no war in Europe, initiated by the WARSAW Pact, without engaging US forces and thus directly involving our full retaliatory power. This is the keystone of the NATO military relationship.

It is also true that forward deployment has created, in effect, a series of buffer states which must be crossed before a serious fight can occur in the continental US.³ Much of our work and wealth has gone into making these countries the necessary place for battle.⁴ Both the US and the USSR have developed such powerful strategic systems that that type of exchange has become mutually suicidal. We also deployed systems that threatened our respective allies, but did not threaten our respective homelands. We could thus theoretically have a theater

nuclear exchange without having to revert to our strategic systems and forcing the primary belligerents to go beyond a destructive point of no return. This, in part, led to the non-US NATO nations to exhibit varying degrees of confidence in the US willingness to risk obliteration for their defense. This has apparently been resolved with the deployment of the Pershing II and the ground-launched cruise missile systems which are forward deployed and capable of striking the Soviet homeland. The US is now in the position of being able to assure its allies that we will resort to the nuclear option and risk our mutual destruction if there is a Soviet invasion of NATO Europe.

Since men proposit to be rational creatures, there must be a way to avoid the certainty of this destruction while retaining the ability to deter the war. After all, some might suspect that a conventional non-nuclear Soviet attack, with clearly announced objectives which ostensibly do not threaten France, and the UK, by being limited to only part of Germany, should not cause the world to go into a nuclear crisis and risk its results. The Soviets do have a massive conventional force which, by all reports, is fully capable of these type of offensive operations.⁵ It thus becomes appropriate for NATO to

maintain the forces necessary to defeat such an attack and thus to deter it. The key to structuring these forces is to insure that they are sufficiently strong to give the impression that can win while not causing them to become excessive burdens on their national economies.

It is presumed that the deployment of the other six NATO designated US divisions along with the arrival of the non-US NATO reserves would be sufficient to achieve the necessary warfighting capability and thus assure the deterred war. There is, however, some question about the ability of the various NATO nations to make timely mobilization and deployment decisions even if they are afforded the strategic warning time necessary to actually react. This problem could be exacerbated by a series of feints and unconsumated scares similar to the 'go and stop' tactics of the Egyptians in 1972. General Rogers has never publicly appeared very sanguine about his probability of conducting a successful conventional defense and continues to support the NATO policy of resorting to first use of nuclear weapons.⁶

Given these circumstances, a reasonable war fighting scenario can be devised which deteriorates rapidly into a SACEUR request for nuclear release from the two NATO

nuclear power. Assume that both heads of state consider the situation so critical that they grant some form of limited release of tactical weapons. To this point the scenario follows a well-worn and predictable path. This path, however, contains a little discussed assumption yet one which is absolutely critical to a coherent defense. The assumption is that the non-nuclear NATO allies will continue to support their earlier decision to authorize the use of nuclear weapons. Naturally, unilateral action by one of the nuclear powers to restore a front is possible, but that is totally inconsistent with coalition warfare.

Consider, for example, the potential repercussions if the chancellor of the FRG decided not to continue his support of the decision to go nuclear. This is not so far-fetched as might be imagined. After all, the primary duty of an elected head-of-state is to preserve and protect his society, its way of life and its citizens. The acceptance of a NATO nuclear decision is completely inconsistent with that duty. That acceptance would be tantamount to a decision to sacrifice forever the German ideal for the improbable benefit of the rest of the free world. The issue is more significant than suggested by

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ENDNOTES (continued)

11. The presumption here is that Cuba projects a threat into the gulf and during a war or war crisis would require some neutralization to provide for unopposed deployment.

12. After the 1972 Arab-Israeli War, US Army doctrine evolved around the concept of having to fight a very short violent war with heavy losses and little warning. Thus, it could be extrapolated that the battle was to be won or lost by the forward deployed forces and hence they had to be structured accordingly.

13. The US Army has developed a risk/probability relationship for the various forms of conflict. This gives low risk and high probability of occurrence to low intensity and the opposite to a nuclear war.

14. It is possible that an agreement could be reached with the SASC which would create a "win-win" situation. It could direct a reduction along the recommend lines which DoD would not vigorously oppose and, in return, the SASC would support increase in the strategic mobility program.

15. ARI recently used \$22K as the average cost of a round trip PCS for an Army family in Europe. Assuming a 50% married force, this reduction in personnel strength would lower PCS cost by \$110 to \$160 million over 3 years, which is close to the annual operations cost of a divisional installation.

ENDNOTES

1. President Carter made a promise to withdraw the 2d Inf Div from Korea during his successful 1976 campaign. The division remains in Korea.
2. See "The Alliance," by Richard V. Barret, Simon & Schuster, 1983.
3. Our allies in Europe could legitimately object to their characterization as "buffer states" and no denegation of their sovereignty is intended. The reality, though, does provide the US a geographic mass between ourselves and our opponents.
4. The Soviet sponsored actions of Cuba are seen by some as an attempt to flank the protection of Europe and pose a direct threat to the US.
5. See "In Defense of Forward Defense," Armed Forces Journal International, May 1984, Phillip A. Karber.
6. See "Sword and Shield--ACE attack of WARSAW Pact Follow-on Forces," in NATO's Sixteen Nations, Feb-Mar 1983, by GEN Rogers.
7. An arguable point from FRG point of view as long as its international behavior is consistent with western ideals, but consider what would happen if the two tried to move toward economic, social or political reunification. Mr. Hecker was not allowed his visit to the FRG.
8. See "US European Command: Muscle in the Heartland," Defense, 1984, GEN Rogers.
9. Secretary Elihu Root used this expression when speaking about the Army War College.
10. "The regular annual deployments from the US to Germany of air and ground forces are striking proof of the continuing firm United States commitment to the defense of Europe"--General Dr. Ferdinand Von Sengen and Etterlin in "Defense of Central Europe--The Challenge of the 80's," NATO's Fifteen Nations, Special 2/1981.

This benchmark might be built around the number of battalion mission training weeks performed by USAREUR forces in 1986. This would be augmented by the deployment and mission training of the REFORGER units during that time they are directly preparing for and executing REFORGER. Once this benchmark is established as a measure of NATO directed US conventional activity, national interest and support can be continuously evaluated. As we move into corps REFORGERS full credit for involvement can be demonstrated, even in light of some reductions of forward deployed personnel. The US must convince its allies and potential adversaries that a fully equipped 10 division force deployed prior to hostilities is within its means, even if the number of forward deployed soldiers is adjusted to take advantage of greater lift capabilities. Concurrently, we must convince our friends in Congress that the Army is taking full advantage of the resources they have provided to achieve an acceptable balance between efficiency and operational necessity.

savings throughout the infrastructure--housing, schools, teachers, civilian support employees in baseops, etc. If carefully managed, such an actions's effect on cohesion can be contained by lifting out squads, crews, etc. Additionally, these soldiers would be available to work in CONUS organizations and units with gaping holes and missions with a higher probability of actualization. It does not make the best sense to fully resource a least likely course of action, even if is it a potentially high risk affair. The savings generated by such a reduction can be distributed internally, passed along as budget reductions, or used to upgrade the strategic mobility package.¹⁵ The point is that we will eventually have a strategic movement capability which Congress is sure to try to use to save money. This capability is justified by legitimate war requirements, but if we are not careful it will be used to effect economies and efficiencies which are unexpected and for which we are unprepared.

In order to ameliorate the political impact of what seems an inevitable event in Europe and to establish a benchmark of concern and involvement, NATO could use a mechanism that measures and records conventional ground force activity related to its warfighting capability.

for economic purposes and retention for NATO political purposes as well as lift limitations is to make ALO reductions in selected units.¹⁴ Divisional units could be manned between ALO 2 and 3, particularly the combat units. With the exception of the corps cavalry units, the corps combat units could also sustain those kinds of cuts. The intelligence, communications, nuclear surety type units should not be cut personnel because they have current active operational missions essential to war deterrence. Then, given the untapped capabilities of automation, it should be possible to identify the soldiers in CONUS who would carry 'hip pocket' deployment orders to quickly bring these units back up to ALO 1. They would obviously not be in the reinforcing units already schedules to deploy. They could be gathered and shipped as part of a package of increased state of vigilance, i.e., when CINCEUR goes to REDCON 3. In order to avoid upsetting the airmovement schedules these people would be assembled upon declaration or REDCON 4 and sent by sea from the east coast. This action could generate a forward deployed military personnel reduction of some 10-15,000 and a corresponding reduction in the number of dependents in theater. This 30-45,000 personnel drawdown would generate

movement, he could well respond by forcing adjustments based upon his personal calculations of our ability to reinforce. The 'unexpected response' which we must prepare for is a forced reduction of forward deployed forces which cannot be compensated for before a decision is made to move to the GDP during a crisis. The logic which must be defended against is that which says the upgraded strategic mobility provided through the POM is sufficient to allow a directed force reduction which can be replaced as a crisis builds. After all, why have such an expensive resource as strategic lift without using it to achieve all possible economies?

It appears improbable that the Army will successfully block any form of force reduction. Surely, we will argue that all the lift assets will be fully employed in moving the CONUS based reinforcing units into the theater. That movement will begin far enough ahead of hostilities so as to preclude its availability for massive unit replacement, particularly as it effects equipment. Furthermore, it does not appear to be a savings to withdraw units and POMCUS their equipment because that equipment will be needed for training at the new home base. A solution which seems to meet the conflicting demands for reduction

the resources at hand. This made it necessary to have highly capable fully resourced forces on the ground all of the time.¹² Mobilization was a slow process which generated forces of uncertain capability and with vaguely defined missions. Europe remains the theater with the greatest risk for world annihilation through nuclear confrontation--but it is also being seen as the place where that confrontation is least likely to occur.¹³ This is true, not because of the conventional capabilities of the contending sides, but because nuclear escalation is a certainty and this simply makes the battle not worth the fight. After all, why go to war over something which you are certain to destroy beyond reconstruction? The growth of modern C3I, INF and strategic mobility make possible some near term changes in Europe that would generate efficiencies in people and dollars for the remainder of the force. It is necessary to take some of these steps, or at least lay their groundwork, before Congressional action mandates changes which are not so manageable or desirable. Senator Nunn has been clear in his desire to make changes to the Army structure in Europe. If he becomes convinced that we have the strategic airlift resources which could be used for large scale troop

expensive and creates an enormous strain on the entire defense structure. Naturally, its implementation comes under frequent review with an intent to cut costs. How or why four 2/3 divisions came to be the US Army force in being in Germany is not the issue, but one must certainly accept that operating within the law of the possible, this force is not going to be substantially reduced, at least not as to the numbers of battalions and brigades are concerned. If this is so, then conventional wisdom will mandate that the infrastructure costs associated with quality of life and the dependent population will also remain high. Additionally, the non-fiscal cost spread throughout the CONUS Army and created by the policies caused by the commitment to a highly capable forward deployed force must also remain high.

There is beginning to develop a possible course of action which could provide relief without undue deterioration to the deterrence element and which in fact could provide it with certain advantages. Recall that part of deterrence is associated with the perceived capability to cause great damage and a willingness to use that capability. The force structuring axioms in Europe were that the war was to be short, violent and fought with

force prior to a major cross border violation. Such a tool would be of inestimable value. It shows resolve and provides the means to fight at a less than nuclear level during the initial days of conflict. It does not carry with it the huge political and economic costs associated with mobilization. It gives much more flexibility to the NCA, hence more deterrence and thus more safety. It mitigates some of the effectiveness of the previously mentioned 'stop and go' tactic. Finally, it can be practiced on a reasonably routine basis. Imagine the impact of a six division REFORGER exercise effectively executed on both the Soviets and on our NATO allies.¹⁰ This capability also has war fighting benefits which are substantial. Consider only the implications for the Navy if the immediate reinforcements are already in theater when hostilities begin. The SLOC problem is much less severe and makes feasible an entirely different set of operational deployments. It also reduces the effectiveness of Cuba in a global war strategy and hence makes it less valuable to the Soviets in the near term.¹¹

This ability also has real time budget implications which need review. Forward deployment has been and will continue to be a key part of our strategic posture. It is

is low and does not justify the coincident high risk of significant damage, while the second, on our allies, is that the generated force is capable of convincing the enemy not to attack.

The existing ground force contribution for NATO by the US consists of 10 divisions deployed within 10 days. This force is expected to expand as mobilization proceeds and lift is available. Of this 10 division force, almost half is already forward deployed and in a very high state of readiness. Additionally, much of the necessary equipment for the remaining division is also forward deployed. This is significant because it provides the potential for making the 10 division force a reality in the specified time. In fact, we soon will be able to provide that force on the ground in theater without a major mobilization. This is not to say that the force could sustain itself during a war, but it could sustain itself in the last stages of war deterrence. The key positive ingredients here are the POMCUS stocks, the developing strategic lift and the reliable deep intelligence system.

It will soon be possible to offer a new element into the deterrent escalation process--that of deploying the

France. The essential roles of the non-nuclear combat forces are to act as hostages, to mollify public opinion about the inevitability of the nuclear exchange, to provide a unifying multinational component to the NATO structure and to provide a foundation for the nuclear reality. NATO would and could not long survive as a political force in Europe if conventional forces were not part of the package. Thus, a discussion of conventional force changes can only be seriously considered when it is reviewed as an element of a political structure whose essential role is war deterrence. Additions to the structure which may improve 'war fighting' but which do little to improve war deterrence ought to be evaluated within the DOD on a global priority basis, competing there for resources. They should not be protected by the priority given under the NATO cloak. Similarly, deletions which do not constitute a threat to deterrence should be equally susceptible to review in the programming and budgeting process. The essential mission of NATO is "not to promote war, but to preserve the peace."⁹ Peace is preserved by generating a force which is capable of creating two sets of impressions: The first, on the perspective opponent, is that the probability of success

first and most obvious possible benefit to be derived from 'last minute' neutrality is survival as a state by removing themselves from the list of combatants. There is also the possibility that the FRG could negotiate some form of reunification with the GDR, under Soviet control, as the price for surrender. This would meet all the requirements of an 'unexpected response.' The US has, for political and economic reasons, placed great reliance on the German territorial forces and local infrastructure for its essential logistic and communications support. Thus, our ability to actually fight a war in Europe is inextricably tied into the continued existence of that support.⁸ Its absence or unexpected withdrawal would make warfighting on the continent a fiasco for the US. Thus, we have built our own private achilles heel, only this heel is at the mercy of our friends.

The foregoing simply says that more than ever before, NATO has as its true mission war deterrence. It will never be a war fighter as long as mass destruction remains the ultimate recourse because it must ultimately destroy itself. The primary deterrent forces are the strategic nuclear forces of the US and the theater forces of the US (Pershing II and the cruise missiles), Great Britain and

the flippant phrase "better red than dead" because it is a national decision of survival or unquestioned annihilation. Already there are signs in the German political scene that this is a developing issue. It well ought to be! Germany, in its generic sense, has already been subjected to two catastrophic defeats in this century. The misery and suffering of the society generated by those feats must be a major force in current social and political thought. In addition, the country is split and treated, with some barely concealed thankfulness, as two sovereign nations; although without full authority to act independently on the international scene. It is true that Germany is largely responsible for its recent past, but that does not make the destruction of a future war any more palatable. In fact, the Germans could make the point that they were responsible for what has gone before, but now they are virtually without recourse if another European war were to breakout. They are without recourse, that is, unless they decide not to take part in that war. After all, what do they actually have to lose by attempting to disassociate themselves just prior to nuclear escalation? They may have quite a bit to gain, and they may have the means to achieve it. The

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